

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO ALL AFRICAN DIPLOMATIC POSTS

UNCLAS STATE 122819

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF STATE MAY 25 PRESS BRIEFING

FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM THE STATE DEPARTMENT DAILY
PRESS BRIEFING OF MAY 25 FOR YOUR INFORMATION:

Q: WHAT INFORMATION DO YOU HAVE ABOUT CUBANS IN ETHIOPIA

AND HOW MIGHT THE PRESENCE OF CUBANS THERE AFFECT THEIR
EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH CUBA?

A: THEY ARE IN ETHIOPIA, WE BELIEVE, FOR THE PURPOSE OF
TRAINING. WE BELIEVE THIS IS A FAIRLY RECENT DEVELOPMENT
THAT CANNOT BE DEFINITE ON THE TIMING. WE DON'T HAVE ANY
INFORMATION ON CASTRO'S INTENTIONS AS TO SENDING MORE
TECHNICIANS OR COMBAT TROOPS TO ETHIOPIA.

WE HAVE NOTED IN THE PAST THERE HAVE BEEN PRESS
REPORTS OF LARGE NUMBERS OF CUBAN TROOPS BEING SENT TO
AFRICA THAT HAVE NOT PROVED OUT.

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IF HOWEVER THIS REPORT SHOULD PROVE ACCURATE, IT
WOULD BE A SERIOUS DEVELOPMENT. INsofar AS HOW THIS --

Q: WHAT REPORT?

A: THE REPORT THAT 400 OR 500 MORE ARE EXPECTED AND IN
FACT THAT THERE ARE 50 CUBAN MILITARY ADVISERS, BOTH.
THAT IS, THERE ARE LARGE -- WHAT WOULD BE REALLY SERIOUS
WOULD BE IF IN FACT A LARGE NUMBER OF CUBAN TROOPS WERE
IN FACT GOING INTO ETHIOPIA. WE WOULD VIEW THIS AS A

SERIOUS DEVELOPMENT.

WE HAVE ALREADY MADE CLEAR THAT CUBA'S INTERVENTION IN AFRICA IS AN ACTIVITY THAT COULD IMPEDE IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS. IN THIS CONNECTION, WE WILL BE WATCHING CLOSELY THIS DEVELOPMENT AND ANY OTHER CUBAN ACTIVITY IN AFRICA.

Q: YOUR STATEMENT, IF TURNED AROUND, AND TELL ME IF I AM CORRECT -- YOU HAVE NO OBJECTION TO CUBAN TECHNICIANS MOVING INTO ETHIOPIA. WHAT YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT IS THE POSSIBILITY OF TROOPS.

A: I THINK THAT WE HAVE ALWAYS EXPRESSED OUR CONCERN ABOUT THE EXISTENCE OF A FOREIGN MILITARY PRESENCE OF ANY SORT IN AFRICA. OUR POSITION HAS BEEN THAT AFRICAN PROBLEMS ARE BETTER SOLVED BY AFRICANS IN ANY CASE.

THE DIRECT ANSWER, HOWEVER, HAS TO DO WITH THE REPORTS THAT 500 OR 600 CUBAN TROOPS MIGHT BE COMING INTO AFRICA.

Q: IS IT YOUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THESE TROOPS ARE THERE FOR THE PURPOSE OF TEACHING THE ETHIOPIANS HOW TO USE RUSSIAN-MADE MILITARY EQUIPMENT?

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A: IN THE FIRST PLACE, WE DON'T HAVE A CONFIRMATION THAT 500 OR 600 TROOPS ARE THERE.

Q: THE 50 TECHNICIANS ARE PRESUMABLY MILITARY TECHNICIANS, IS THAT WHAT YOU ARE SAYING?

A: PRESUMABLY.

Q: IS IT YOUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THEY ARE THERE TO TEACH THE ETHIOPIANS HOW TO USE RUSSIAN SUPPLIES?

A: WE DON'T HAVE MUCH MORE THAN YOU HAVE.

Q: DO YOU HAVE CONFIRMATION OF THE 50 TECHNICIANS?

A: AS I SAID, WE HAVE REPORTS THAT ABOUT 50 OR SO -- THAT WE HAVE REPORTS OF THIS.

Q: WHEN YOU SAY THEY ARE THERE FOR TRAINING, THERE ARE VARIOUS THINGS GOING ON IN ETHIOPIA. ARE THEY BEING TRAINED TO PUT DOWN THE ERITREAN REBELLION?

A: I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING ON THAT.

Q: COULD YOU POSSIBLY CLARIFY THIS? THE REPORTS SAID THAT WESTERN DIPLOMATS GAVE THIS FIGURE. DOES THE UNITED STATES NOT HAVE A SIMILAR REPORT FROM WESTERN DIPLOMATS OR WESTERN INTELLIGENCE SOURCES IN AFRICA. I CAN'T BELIEVE THAT YOU ARE SIMPLY MAKING A COMMENT ON THE BASIS OF --

A: WHAT I AM MAKING A COMMENT ON IS THE 50 TECHNICIANS, WHICH I AM CONFIRMING.

Q: I RECOGNIZE THAT. BUT YOU ARE EXPRESSING YOUR ALARM ABOUT THE OTHER --
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A: WE DON'T HAVE ANY INFORMATION ON HIS INTENTIONS TO SEND MORE TROOPS. WE ARE TRYING TO POINT OUT THAT WE HAVE SEEN REPORTS LIKE THAT IN THE PAST WHICH HAVE NOT PROVED TRUE. WE ARE SAYING IF IT SHOULD PROVE TRUE, HOWEVER, THAT THAT WOULD BE A VERY SERIOUS DEVELOPMENT.

Q: ARE THE 50 TECHNICIANS IN AND OF THEMSELVES A BAR OR AN IMPEDIMENT TO IMPROVING OR BROADENING RELATIONS WITH CUBA, OR NOT?

A: WE HAVE ALREADY MADE CLEAR THAT CUBA'S INTERVENTION IN AFRICA IS A DEVELOPMENT THAT COULD IMPEDE IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS.

Q: BUT LET ME POINT OUT THERE THAT WE BEGAN OR CONTINUED THIS PROCESS OF TRYING TO IMPROVE RELATIONS AFTER CUBA PRESENCE IN AFRICA WAS ESTABLISHED.

A: THAT IS ABSOLUTELY CORRECT. WE ARE TRYING TO IMPROVE OUR CONTACTS WITH CUBA PRECISELY FOR THE PURPOSE OF BEING ABLE TO DISCUSS MATTERS SUCH AS THIS WITH THEM.

Q: HAVE YOU BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE CUBANS ABOUT ACTIVITY ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA OTHER THAN ANGOLA, SPECIFICALLY ETHIOPIA, AND HAVE YOU WARNED THEM OR SUGGESTED TO THEM THAT THE NORMALIZATION PROCESS WILL HAVE

TO SLOW OR STOP UNLESS THEY GET OUT, OR WHATEVER?

A: WE HAVE NOT DISCUSSED THIS ISSUE WITH THE CUBANS.

Q: WHICH ISSUE?

A: THE WHOLE ISSUE, AT THIS POINT, OF THEIR MILITARY PRESENCE. THIS IS DIRECT DISCUSSION. HOWEVER -- I AM NOW
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GOING ON BACKGROUND -- WE HAVE TOLD THEM THAT WE ARE INTERESTED IN DISCUSSING THIS WHOLE RANGE OF CUBAN ACTIVITY IN AFRICA. IT HAS NOT BEEN DISCUSSED. NO TALKS HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED IN WHICH THIS ISSUE OR ETHIOPIA MIGHT BE DISCUSSED. THE CUBANS HAVE INDICATED A WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS THE SUBJECT OF AFRICA WITH US AT SOME TIME.

NOW, OFF BACKGROUND, AS YOU ALL KNOW, CASTRO HAS PUBLICLY DECLARED THAT CUBA'S ROLE IN ANGOLA IS NOT A NEGOTIABLE ITEM.

Q: MAY I GO BACK AND CLARIFY ONE POINT? YOU KEEP TALKING ABOUT TECHNICIANS. I AM NOT SURE I CAUGHT IT WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED TALKING ABOUT THIS. ARE YOU CLEARLY SAYING THESE ARE MILITARY TECHNICIANS RATHER THAN HYDROELECTRIC POWER STATION ENGINEERS, OR SOMETHING?

A: YES, THE PHRASE I HAVE HERE IS MILITARY TECHNICIANS.

Q: THERE HAVE BEEN QUESTIONS HERE IN THE PAST ABOUT CUBANS IN GUINEA-BISSAU, OR WHAT HAVE YOU. WHY HASN'T THERE BEEN ANY MENTION BEFORE UNTIL TODAY ON ETHIOPIA?

A: FRANKLY, SINCE I DON'T HAVE ALL THE OLD BRIEFINGS IN FRONT OF ME, I CAN ONLY SPECULATE THAT THE REASON IS THAT THERE WAS NOT A CONFIRMATION THAT WE TRUSTED ENOUGH TO SAY YES, THEY ARE THERE, OR YES, THEY ARE NOT THERE.

Q: DID THE PRESIDENT, WHEN HE SAID OVER THE WEEKEND THAT CASTRO DOESN'T WANT AN IMPROVEMENT, DID HE KNOW THEN ABOUT THE 50 TECHNICIANS BEING SENT TO ETHIOPIA?

A: I DON'T KNOW. YOU WOULD HAVE TO ASK THE PRESIDENT THAT. I DON'T KNOW.

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Q: YOU JUST NOW SAID ON BACKGROUND THAT THE CUBANS HAVE EXPRESSED A WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE OF CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA. CAN YOU ON BACKGROUND TELL US WHEN THIS WILLINGNESS WAS EXPRESSED, AND THROUGH WHAT CHANNEL?

A: I DON'T THINK IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR ME TO SPECULATE. THERE HAVE BEEN VERY, VERY LIMITED CONTACTS, HOWEVER, SINCE HAVANA.

Q: WHAT IS THE PRESENT STATE OF PLAY WITH THE CUBANS? IS THERE ANYTHING GOING ON RIGHT NOW?

A: NO, THERE IS NOTHING OF ANY SUBSTANCE GOING ON AT

THIS POINT.

Q: WITH ALL THE TROUBLES ETHIOPIA IS HAVING WITH AT LEAST TWO INSURGENT MOVEMENTS, AND IF THE CUBANS DO NOT SEND TROOPS IN TECHNICIANS COULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE STABILITY OF ETHIOPIA -- AND I AM SERIOUS -- IN ITS CURRENT SEMI-FALLING-APART STAGE?

A: I THINK THAT WE HAVE NOTED BEFORE THAT WE FIND THE PRESENCE OF CUBAN TROOPS IN AFRICA AN ACTIVITY WHICH WE CONSIDER DISTURBING. AND I HAVE ALSO SAID TODAY THAT WE WANT TO TALK TO THEM ABOUT IT.

I REALLY DON'T WANT TO GO INTO THE QUESTION OF STABILIZING, OR DESTABILIZING, OR ETHIOPIA'S PARTICULAR PROBLEMS IN REFERENCE TO THE CUBAN PRESENCE.

Q: DO YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION THAT THE SOVIET UNION IS ENCOURAGING ALL THIS?

A: I HAVE NOTHING ON THAT AT ALL.

Q: ARE YOU SAYING THAT ETHIOPIA IS THE ONLY COUNTRY, UNCLASSIFIED

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APART FROM ANGOLA, IN AFRICA WHERE YOU HAVE CONFIRMED REPORTS OF CUBAN MILITARY TECHNICIANS?

A: NO, I AM NOT SAYING THAT.

Q: WHAT OTHER COUNTRIES ARE THERE?

A: I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING ON THAT.

Q: DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA OF ANYTHING ON THE SUDAN REQUEST, FROM MR. YOUNG, THAT THE U.S. SUPPLY ARMS TO THEM?

A: WE ARE PREPARED TO GIVE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO THE REQUEST OF THE SUDANESE GOVERNMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR GLOBAL ARMS TRANSFER POLICY. WE HIGHLY VALUE OUR

GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE SUDAN. IN 1976 PRESIDENT FORD

MADE SUDAN ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE U.S. DEFENSE ARTICLES AND SERVICES; AND PRESIDENT CARTER SUBSEQUENTLY AGREED TO SELL THE SUDAN SIX C-130 AIRCRAFT.

I THINK AT THIS POINT, HOWEVER, THE OPERATIVE PHRASE IS: WE ARE PREPARED TO GIVE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO THE REQUEST -- OF TWO REQUESTS -- OF THE SUDANESE GOVERNMENT.

Q: IN LIGHT OF THEIR VERY CLOSE CONNECTION WITH THE EGYPTIANS -- IN THAT CONSIDERATION -- WOULD THE SUDANESE BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE SORT OF ARMS THAT THE EGYPTIANS ARE NOT YET CONSIDERED ELIGIBLE FOR?

A: I THINK THE PHRASE THAT IS RELEVANT HERE IS: IN THE CONTEXT OF OUR GLOBAL ARMS TRANSFER POLICY -- WHICH SPECIFIES NATIONS AND THE TYPES OF ARMAMENT WHICH ARE IMMEDIATELY AVAILABLE UNDER THE GENERAL GUIDELINES OF UNCLASSIFIED

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THE PRESIDENT'S TRANSFER POLICY.

Q: THERE IS A SPECIAL REFINEMENT APPLYING TO THE MIDDLE EAST, AS ENUNCIATED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE. WOULD CONSIDERATION OF ARMS TO SUDAN BE BOUND BY THIS SAME EXTRARESTRICTIVE PRINCIPLE THAT THE SECRETARY AND OTHERS OF THE ADMINISTRATION HAVE ENUNCIATED?

DOES THIS CONTRIBUTE TO STABILITY? WILL IT TRIP THE BALANCE?

A: I DON'T THINK THAT I WANT TO WALK TOO FAR OUT IN APPLYING A MIDDLE EASTERN POLICY TO THIS QUESTION. I WOULD SIMPLY SAY THAT WHAT DOES APPLY, AND THAT I CAN SAY SAFELY, DOES APPLY, IS THE GENERAL ARMS TRANSFER POLICY. THAT POLICY, OF COURSE, ALLOWS THE PRESIDENT TO MAKE DECISIONS FROM TIME TO TIME. I AM NOT IMPLYING THAT HE IS GOING TO.

Q: SO FAR, ALL EGYPT CAN GET ITS HANDS ON IS FIVE OR SIX C-130 TRANSPORTS. IS IT CONCEIVABLE THAT SUDAN CAN GET BETTER MILITARY EQUIPMENT THAN EGYPT CAN GET?

A: I THINK I SIMPLY HAVE TO SAY: I DON'T KNOW.

Q: SPECIFICALLY WHEN THE SUDANESE FOREIGN MINISTER, I GUESS IT WAS, WAS HERE SEVERAL MONTHS AGO, HE SAID THAT HE PUT IN A REQUEST FOR F-5'S TO THE UNITED STATES. IS THAT THE REQUEST WHICH IS BEING SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED?

A: I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING ON, FOR INSTANCE, THE STATE OF PLAY ON THAT PARTICULAR REQUEST THAT HE SAID HE MADE. I JUST DON'T KNOW.
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Message Attributes

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